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JAMES LURVEY,
OF GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS,
A PATRIOT OF THE REVOLUTION.

At a meeting of the MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, held in Boston on Thursday, November 10, 1898, Dr. SAMUEL A. GREEN said:—

The following anecdote, told by Dr. William Eustis to Dr. Redford Webster, formerly an officer of the Historical Society, is found in a volume of Collections (second series, IV. 51, 52) of this Society, which was published in the year 1816. At that time Dr. Eustis had been a surgeon in the army throughout the Revolutionary War, and had also been a Member of Congress, and Secretary of War under President Madison; and later he was Governor of the Commonwealth. I mention these facts in some detail in order to show that he was a man of position and prominence, and that his statements are entitled to weight. Furthermore, for a considerable period of time while hospital surgeon, Dr. Eustis lived in the house of Colonel Beverly Robinson, opposite to West Point, in which Benedict Arnold had his headquarters. These circumstances all go to confirm the story as told in the account, which is given below:—

ANECDOTE OF THE SOLDIERS OF ARNOLD.

WHEN the Traitor Arnold deserted his post at West Point on Hudson's River, he was rowed in his barge to the British Sloop of war,

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 "the Vulture," then lying near Tappan Bay. On leaving the shore from his quarters, which were on the East side of the river, about two miles below the point, the Cockswain of the boat put the bow of the boat up the river as usual, for the point. Arnold ordered him to put the boat about and go down the river with all possible expedition, adding, that he was going on board the "Vulture" on business of the greatest importance. After about an hour and an half or two hours, the barge reached the Vulture. Arnold went on board and ordered the crew to come on board. They did so. After some time Arnold came on deck from the cabin, and told the crew that he had quit the rebel service and joined the standard of his Britannick Majesty; that he should have orders to raise a brigade in that service, and addressing himself to the corporal and eight privates, which constituted his barge's crew, added, "if you will join me, my lads, I will make serjeants or corporals of you all; and for you James," turning to the corporal, "I will do something more." Surprized and indignant the corporal replied, "No sir, one coat is enough for me to wear at a time." Two of the bargemen who had been British deserters remained with Arnold, the others with their cockswain, the corporal, returned to their duty, not in the barge they had rowed down, but in an ordinary inferior boat. Arnold having the meanness to steal the barge, which he probably kept for his own use.

The name of the corporal was James Lurvey or Larvey (it is presumed Lurvey.) He belonged to the Massachusetts regiment, commanded by Rufus Putnam, and it is believed came from the county of Worcester, either from Brookfield or some neighbouring town.

The circumstances were related to me by Lurvey, who was well known to me, and confirmed by the other bargemen on their return in the old boat, who heard James make the reply to Arnold.

As an instance of virtue on the part of Lurvey, and as a cutting reproach on Arnold, I have always had a desire to see the anecdote on record. It is possible Lurvey may still be alive, in which case his evidence may afford more particulars than my recollection at this distance of time can supply. One of the bargemen by the name of Hawkes belonged to the same district with Lurvey, but from the state of his health at the time it is doubtful whether he is alive.

According to your request I have stated the principal fact, and am with respect,

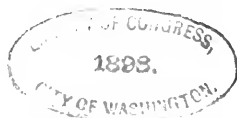
Dear Sir,

your obedient servant,

Dr. R. WEBSTER.

W. EUSTIS.

Within a very few years the Rolls of the Revolutionary soldiers preserved among the Massachusetts Archives at the



State House have been carefully indexed ; and it is easy now to trace the military history of the men whose names are there recorded. From this source I have gathered various references to Lurvey, from which a skeleton of his army service can be put together. In these days of patriotic societies, made up of the Sons and the Daughters, etc., such facts are always welcome. It is evident that Dr. Eustis was wrong in his impression that the soldier came from Brookfield or any other town of that neighborhood, as the records show that he belonged in Gloucester. In detailing men to row a boat, it was very natural to take a coxswain who came from the seacoast, and one who would know how to manage a crew or to pull an oar.

James Lurvey's name first appears on a Muster Roll as having enlisted on May 29, 1775, in Captain Rowe's company, Colonel Bridge's regiment ; and then on the Coat Roll of eight months' service. Again, he appears as a corporal in a Return of Captain Benjamin Gates's company, Colonel Putnam's regiment, dated at Albany, on February 9, 1778 ; and later, in a "Pay Account," as a corporal in Captain Gardner's company, Colonel Putnam's regiment, from March 4, 1777, to December 31, 1779. The name is found, also, in a "Pay Account" for the year 1780, where he is still recorded as a corporal. It is found, again, in "A Return of the Men belonging to the Town of Gloucester Jan^y 1781 in the Continental Army for 3 Years or During the War," as a sergeant in Captain Killam's company, Fifth Massachusetts regiment (Colonel Putnam's).

Our late associate Mr. Babson, in his History of Gloucester (p. 596), says that Lurvey was a private in Captain Rowe's company at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Furthermore, there was a John Hawks serving in a Massachusetts regiment, whose residence, according to one roll, was Falmouth (Portland), and, according to another, Casco Bay ; and, presumably, he was the bargeman alluded to by Dr. Eustis as coming from the same district as Lurvey, though this statement would be true only in a very general way.

These several references to James Lurvey show clearly that



he came from Gloucester, and not from any town in Worcester County. In his day and generation he may have been an obscure individual, but he was true to his country. Like many other patriots of the Revolution, he has long been forgotten, and the act has passed out of mind. The purpose of these remarks is to rescue his name from undeserved oblivion, and to place it in the list of those whose memory is fondly cherished by his countrymen.

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